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GOVERNMENT

OF THE

PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Economic Survey

Town of Blairmore

L Dept of Industry

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

HON. A. J. HOOKE
MINISTER

RALPH R. MOORE
DEPUTY MINISTER

ECONOMIC SURVEY

TOWN OF BLAIRMORE

by

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

This survey was compiled with the assistance of Town Officials, Board of Trade and Citizens who were familiar with the town's history.

oOo

MARCH 1950

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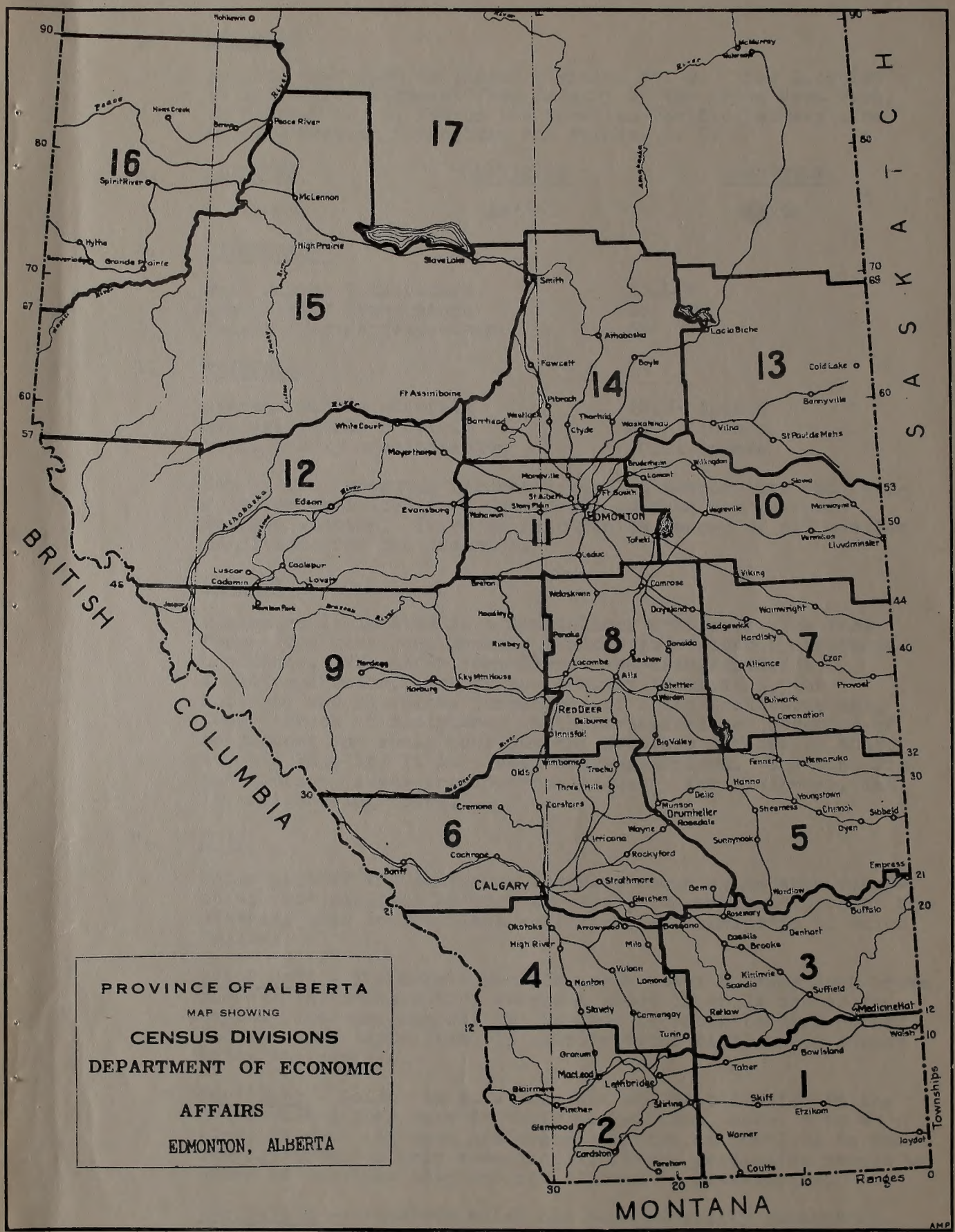
PROVINCE OF ALBERTA
MAP SHOWING
CENSUS DIVISIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AFFAIRS
EDMONTON, ALBERTA
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BRITISH COLUMBIA
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TOWN OF BLAIRMORE MARCH 1950

1. LOCATION

Section 35-7-4-W5 in Census Division No. 2. This location is 160 miles southwest from Calgary in the Crows Nest Pass, on highway No. 3, and on the Canadian Pacific Railway line running between Lethbridge and Fernie, B. C.

2.

ALTITUDE	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
4,235 ft.	49/36	114/26

3. TEMPERATURE

Mean Summer Temperature	55.5°F
Mean Winter Temperature	25 °F
Yearly Average Temperature	39 °F

4. RAINFALL

Average yearly rainfall	13.31 inches
Average yearly snowfall	67 inches
Total yearly precipitation	20.01 inches

Note: The foregoing figures regarding temperature and rainfall are estimated from data obtained from the nearest weather station. There is no definite record of all weather conditions for the district.

5. GEOLOGY

Blairmore is located in a mountainous area where the rock formations have been greatly faulted and folded by tectonic movements. The older formations have been exposed by faulting erosion. Two of these older formations, the Kootenay and Blairmore formations of lower Cretaceous Age, form bedrock at Blairmore. Both formations are a series of sandstones and shale beds but the Kootenay differs in that, at this locality it is a coal bearing horizon. The coal from the Kootenay seams provides the industry for Blairmore, and its neighboring towns.

6. SOIL

While part of the Blairmore district occupies an area classed as "not explored by soil surveys", the major portion of the district lies in the black soil zone, a description of which follows:

Black Soil - The normal profile has a black to very dark brown surface (A) horizon that averages about 12 to 14 inches in depth. The more compact (B) horizon is brown to dark brown; and the lime layer (Bca) is usually found at 30 to 40 inches below the surface.

Fertility - Soils in this zone are the most fertile in the province and they have in their surface foot, about 3 to 4 times as much nitrogen and organic matter as there is in the average brown or grey wooded soil. Every precaution should be taken to see that they are not allowed to deteriorate.

Vegetation - Grassland which has been partially invaded by woodlands (mainly deciduous trees) often referred to as parkland.

7. HISTORY

Like most coal mining centres, Blairmore grew up with a terrific boom. The fabulous deposits of coal enabled it to continue to grow and prosper and gave it a very optimistic outlook for the future.

Official census figures reveal the actual growth of the community. When Blairmore was incorporated as a village in 1901 it had a population of 231. When it was incorporated as a town in 1911, its population was 1,137. In 1921 the population was 1,552; in 1931 - 1,629; and in 1941 the population reached 1,731.

Blairmore was the first settlement in the Crows Nest Pass. The way for a community was opened in 1898 when the Canadian Pacific Railway put a line through the Pass and began operating in December of that year. The site of Blairmore was the first stopping place as the steel was extended westward through the Pass. It was first given the name "Tenth Siding" and a short time later the name was changed to "The Springs", named after the nearby sulphur springs.

On November 15, 1898, the name of the stop was changed again. This time it was given the name "Blairmore" after Hon. A. G. Blair, then Minister of railways.

The first railway station was a log cabin built on the south side of the tracks and a Mr. Murphy was the first station agent. He stayed only a month and was succeeded by Harry C. Lyon, one of the founders of Blairmore. Felix Montabitti was the foreman of the railway section and he and Mr. Lyon built the first houses of Blairmore. Both dwellings were log houses and were built in 1899.

The following year, Mr. Lyon built a log store building and established the first mercantile business in the "Pass". He was later elected as the village's first Mayor.

In 1901 Blairmore began a building boom and among the construction that year were three hotels and several other business establishments. The boom, however, was checked by a litigation in which both Mr. Lyon and Mr. Montabitti claimed ownership of the townsite. Not until a few years later, after the litigation was ended, did Blairmore resume its building program.

As a result of high fire insurance rates and because of the high cost of importing fireproof building materials, a new industry was born at Blairmore. In 1909 a cement manufacturing plant was established and began operating under the name of "The Rocky Mountain Cement Company Ltd." In 1915 the company changed ownership and shortly after ceased operations.

Development of the coal reserves at Blairmore started as a result of the development of the Frank mine. News of the rich coal seams at Frank had spread and reached the ears of J. J. Fleutot and C. Remy, then Canadian representatives of the company known as "Gold Fields Ltd." of British Columbia. This company was engaged in mining operations in British Columbia.

Officials of the company came to the Crows Nest Pass, investigated the area and acquired a few hundred acres of coal land on Gold Creek, north of Frank in the Grassy Mountain coal zone.

This company established the French Camp "Lille", six miles north of Frank and during the winter of 1902 while development of the camp was in progress, Mr. Fleutot went to France. On April 2, 1903, and while in France, he effected the organization of West Canadian Collieries Ltd. and it was then that the Gold Fields Company holdings in the Crows Nest Pass were transferred to the new company.

In 1903, the company acquired the Byron Creek coal rights, a large tract lying to the south of the main railway line, where the Adanac mine is now operating. Later the company obtained the coal property at Blairmore, and in 1915, the present Greenhill mine was opened.

Blairmore has made remarkable industrial progress. It is now a large cosmopolitan community, enjoying unprecedented prosperity, and continuing to register substantial improvements with each passing year.

8. LIVING CONDITIONS

The town of Blairmore in the Crows Nest Pass of the Rocky Mountains is entirely surrounded by year-round scenic beauty. Blairmore spreads out over a part of the mountain valley, which was apparently selected for its width to afford easy development of a compact town. Business and residential establishments are located on both sides of the highway. However, the majority of the businesses are on the north side.

Like other mining towns, due to dust and soot, the exterior appearance of the houses has a tendency toward drabness. Actually, the miners plan their homes for comfort and utility and the interiors are homey and comfortable. Of recent years, however, citizens of Blairmore are taking more interest in the outside appearance of the homes and are making marked improvements.

Favored with full employment and comparatively high earnings, the citizens of Blairmore have spent large amounts of money to improve their living standard, and at the same time have managed to save considerable sums in bank savings accounts and war savings bonds. During the war years, Blairmore invested over $1,250,000.00 in war savings bonds.

Though Blairmore is economically supported by only its large coal mining industry, it is by no means lacking in progress. The town is served with all utilities except natural gas and sewer and offers the finest in educational and recreational facilities.

Those citizens of Blairmore who wish to take part in sports activities have at their disposal a tennis court, a covered hockey arena, a curling rink, a ball park and a bowling alley. A ski run, now under preparation, will be ready for use this coming winter and will be equipped with a ski tow. For the hunter, big game and trout fishing is plentiful.

There are 467 resident houses and 40 business establishments, part of the latter being modern stores where all domestic necessities may be obtained.

At least 80% of all homes are owner-occupied indicating that a slight housing shortage still exists. Rental rates for 4 and 5 room houses vary between $30.00 and $50.00

Generally speaking, residents of Blairmore are a happy lot and live in harmony despite the fact that the town's population is made up of people from many different countries.

9. ADMINISTRATION

The administration of this community is conducted by the town council which is comprised of a mayor and six councillors. The mayor is elected for a term of two years, and the councillors are elected, two each year for three year terms. A town secretary-treasurer and a utilities committee have been appointed by the town council.

10. LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The town building by-laws state that plans for new construction must be approved by the town council and that all buildings erected on main street must be fireproof.

Electrical installations must conform to the regulations of the Alberta Electrical Protection Act.

The Sanitary regulations conform to Alberta Department of Public Health regulations.

11. FIRE PROTECTION

The town fire department consists of a ten man volunteer crew, one of whom acts as fire chief. The entire crew is protected by accident insurance.

Equipment consists of one fire truck equipped with a booster pump and a full line of fire fighting apparatus. Members of the crew are conveniently located in the vicinity of the fire hall and may thus assemble with maximum speed and efficiency.

12. TAX STRUCTURE

% of Actual Value		1950 Assessment	Mill Rate
Land 100%		$ 262,052.00	Amalgamated 40
Improvements	66 2/3%	$ 945,970.00	mills
	Total	$1,208,022.00	

13. AREAS

Area of town	500 acres
Streets, lanes and highways	56 acres
Public parks and playgrounds	10 acres

Road and Street Mileage

Paved	Gravel	Total
5	2	7

There is approximately 2 miles of concrete sidewalk.

14. SEWER AND WATER MAIN

Water main	10 miles
Sewer main	none

15. POWER

Blairmore, along with all other towns and villages in the Crows Nest Pass, obtains its electric power from the East Kootenay Power Co. of British Columbia.

This company's domestic and commercial business in the Province of Alberta is very limited, being restricted to a few customers adjacent to their Sentinel Plant. The domestic rate is $2.00 fixed charge plus 5¢ per Kilowatt Hour, although they have no commercial customers, the rate to such for small installations like service stations or tourist camps, would be the same. The company has recently introduced new rates in British Columbia to both domestic and commercial customers, and their intentions are to introduce them shortly in Alberta as well.

Practically all domestic and commercial power in the Pass is supplied by coal companies or municipalities from power purchased in bulk from the East Kootenay Power Co. In Blairmore the town's west end is supplied by West Canadian Collieries Ltd., while the east end is supplied by the town of Blairmore, who in turn obtain its supply in bulk from West Canadian Collieries.

Individual consumer's rates in Blairmore are as follows:

Domestic

Flat rate - 8¢ per Kilowatt hour.

Power

Flat rate - 5¢ per Kilowatt hour.

Discount

10% if paid on or before the 25th of each month.

16. WATER

Blairmore's water supply is obtained from York Creek, a crystal clear stream high above the town. Water runs from the creek, into a nearby reservoir and from there runs down by gravity flow through the main pipe and into the town distribution system. The water is pure and does not require any filtering or chlorinating process. It maintains a pressure of 55 lbs. per square inch.

Water rates in effect are as follows:

Domestic Rate

For house with bath and toilet - $2.00 per month.

Industrial and Commercial

Stores and Restaurants - $5.00 per month.
Large Hotels - $22.00 per month.

Water Analysis

	Parts per Million
Hardness	110
Total solids	150
Loss of ignition	67.5
Alkalinity	83
Free ammonia	.85
Albuminoid	.94
Nitrites	None
Nitrates	None
Iron	None
Chlorine	Less than 1

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17. GAS

None

18. L.P. GAS

None

19. DIESEL FUEL

None

20. COAL

The districts coal supplies are obtained from its own local mines operated by West Canadian Collieries Ltd. Graded coals are purchased at an average price of $7.70 per ton.

21. LOCAL RESOURCES

Coal
Lumber
Limestone
Shale

22. GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND SERVICES

Federal
Post office
R.C.M.P. Detachment
Unemployment Insurance Office
Forestry Office
Customs

Provincial
Court House
Police Magistrate
Alberta Government Telephones
Liquor Store
School District Office No. 628
Public Works Supervisor
Mine Inspector

Municipal
Municipal Office
Town Secretary
Public Utilities Committee
Town Constable
Garbage Collector

23. HEALTH SERVICES

For many years Blairmore had a miners' hospital of its own, but this has been abandoned during the past two years and a large hospital was built midway between Blairmore and Coleman. The hospital was erected and equipped at a cost in the neighborhood of $275,000.00 and serves Blairmore, Coleman, Frank, Bellevue and Hillcrest. This hospital is called the "Crows Nest Municipal Hospital" and operates under the Municipal Hospitals Act. It has a 50 bed capacity and is staffed with fifteen registered nurses, 5 nurses aides and two chefs. The services of six doctors are available at the hospital or on call at all times. There is one resident dentist.

Under the Municipal Hospital Act, rate-payers are allowed a $1.00 per day ward rate. None-ratepayers are obliged to pay a daily rate of $4.75.

To offset this difference and for the benefit of non-ratepayers a contract is offered whereby, for the sum of $15.00 per year, non-ratepayers may receive the same priveleges as a ratepayer. The amount of $15.00 is based on the minimum yearly hospital tax paid by all ratepayers.

The miners have a St. John's Ambulance Brigade which is composed of mine crew members. This group conducts rescue operations and applies first aid in accident events at the mine.

Drugs and medical supplies for domestic use may be obtained from the town drug store.

24. PROFESSIONAL AND SKILLED SERVICES

Barristers and Lawyers	2
Beauty Parlors	2
Barber Shops	3
Jewelers	2
Optometrists	1 visiting monthly.

25. TRANSPORTATION

Canadian Pacific Railway - 2 trains each way daily between Lethbridge and Cranbrook.

Western Canadian Greyhound - 3 buses each way daily.
1 between Macleod and Nelson
1 between Macleod and Penticton
1 between Macleod and Vancouver.

There are five taxis operating in Blairmore.

26. NEWSPAPERS

W. Irwin is editor of the Pass Herald. This newspaper is published twice weekly and has a circulation of 1700.

27. COMMUNICATIONS

Canadian Pacific Telegraph
Alberta Government Telephones
Post office
Radio stations at Lethbridge and Calgary

28. FINANCIAL FACILITIES

The Royal Bank of Canada

29. HOTELS

	No. Rooms	Single Rates	Licensed
Cosmopolitan Hotel	30	$2.00 up	yes
Greenhill Hotel	32	$2.00 up	yes

30. TOURIST CAMPS

There is no tourist camp right in Blairmore. The closest camp is two miles distant, "Turtle Mountain Playground" at Frank. Here there are 8 class "A" and 4 class "B" cabins.

31. CHURCHES

English Church
Roman Catholic
United Church

32. LODGES

Masonic Lodge
B.P.O.E.
Eastern Star
Loyal Order of Moose
~~Rebeccas~~ Rebekah
I.O.D.E.

33. SOCIETIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

Red Cross Society
Fish and Game Association
Home and School Association
Alberta Teacher's Association
Catholic Womens' League

34. SERVICE CLUBS

Board of Trade
Canadian Legion
Canadian Legion Womens' Auxiliary
Lions Club

35. EDUCATION

A well known fact about Blairmore and other coal mining centres of the "Pass" is the great importance attached to education by its citizens regardless of race and nationality. In 1947, 28 of Blairmore's young citizens were attending university. This is something of which the community can be justly proud, for it is credited with having more students per thousand population than the city of Edmonton, the home of Alberta's university.

Educational facilities in Blairmore include a kindergarten which is conducted by an order of Catholic Sisters. There are 2 large schools which contain 14 classrooms. These schools are staffed by 14 teachers and attended by over 300 pupils.

Grades from 1 to 12 are taught and optional subjects are offered including biology, psychology and music.

Since the rural areas of this district are not populated, there are no school vans operating in the district. The entire school attendance is from the town itself.

36. THEATRES AND HALLS

	Capacity	Stage	Piano
Orpheum Theatre	400	yes	yes
Columbus Hall	400	yes	yes
Olivia Hall	150	-	yes

37. CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

B.P.O. Elks Lodge maintains a public library, an institution well used by both generations. The library is open to the public twice each week and is operated by a volunteer Librarian. It is kept supplied in books through grants made by the town.

Blairmore has a school choral group and has won widespread attention through its musical festivals. The choral group is made up of high school and senior public school students.

A sketch club was organized during the winter months of 1949, and its increasing popularity is indicated by its showing of new membership.

38. YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Boys	Girls
Army Cadets	C.G.I.T.
Trail Rangers	

39. SPORTS

Tennis
Skating and hockey
Curling
Baseball and softball
Football
Skiing
Bowling
Swimming

Sports Facilities

1 tennis court
1 covered arena
4 sheets of natural ice
Community ball park
Local ski run (tow to be installed next year)
4 alley building
Swimming pool at Frank

40. FAIRS

Annual sports day - held July 1st.

41. HISTORIC SITES

Frank slide is two miles east of Blairmore. This slide occured in April, 1903, when the whole one side of a mountain came down and completely destroyed the village at its base. It is now one of Alberta's most famous tourist attractions.

42. CO-OPERATIVES

Blairmore Savings and Credit Union

43. INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS

Type of Industry or business	No. of Establishments	Producer or manufacturer	Wholesale	Retail
Banks	1			
Barbers	3			3
Bowling Alleys	1			1
Building Contractors	1	1		1
Cartage Delivery	1			1
Clothing (Mens')	2			2
Concrete Works	1			1
Confectionery	1			1

Type of Industry or Business	No. of Establishments	Producer or Manufacturer	Wholesale	Retail
Dentists	1			
Doctors	2			
Drugs	1			1
Dry Cleaners	1			1
Florists	1			1
Funeral Parlors	1			
Garages and Service Stns	6			6
General Stores	3			3
Grocery Stores	7			7
Green Houses	1			1
Hair Dressers	2			2
Hardware	3			3
Hotels	2			2
Insurance Agents	3			
Jewellers	2			2
Law Offices	2			
Lumber Yards	1			1
Mail Order Office	1			
Milk Distributors	1			1
Meat Markets	5			5
Optometrists	1	visiting periodically		
Oil Distributors	2		2	
Painters and Decorators	1			1
Photographers	1			1
Plumbers	3			3
Pool Rooms	1			1
Printing Shops	1			1
Radio Repair	1			1
Restaurants	4			4
Real Estate Agents				1
Shoe Repair	2			2
Shoe Stores	1			1
Tailor Shops	1			1
Theatres	1			1
Tinsmiths	1			1
Welding and Machine Shops	1			1
Wholesale Fruits	1		1	

44. SITES

There are a number of available industrial sites in Blairmore located along the railway. Though they are not centrally located they can be considered as being quite suitable for small scale industry.

45. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Blairmore is one of Alberta's most important coal mining centres and operates a large soft coal mining industry.

The Greenhill mine was opened in Blairmore in 1915 by West Canadian Collieries Ltd. This mine employs about 540 men and works three seams of coal ranging from 8 to 20 feet thick. On the average it produces more than 3000 tons of coal per day and about 600,000 tons per year. It reached its peak production in 1946 when the year's output totalled 758,369 tons.

A plant for manufacturing briquettes was established at the Greenhill mine in 1948. It's produce is gradually finding a wider market and the output is steadily increasing. This plant operating at full capacity, is capable of producing 250 tons of briquettes per day, and 100,000 tons per year.

During the war years, West Canadian Collieries Ltd., being unable to obtain sufficient miners and men for other jobs, and being pressed with heavy demands for coal by the Canadian Pacific Railway, large industries and public utility plants, decided to boost its coal production by resorting to strip mining. This project began on Grassy Mountain, about 4 miles north of the Greenhill mine. Two strip mines were developed and each of these now produce about 500 tons of coal daily. The coal is trucked to the Greenhill Colliery Plant.

One strip mine, operated for the Company by a private contractor, began operations in July, 1945, and employs 50 men. This mine produces from two seams of coal, each between 25 and 30 feet thick and about 100 feet apart.

The other strip mine is being operated by the company itself. In this mine, the coal seam runs into pockets in places and the thickness of coal ranges from 20 to 100 feet. This mine began operating in July 1946, and employs about 30 men, including 15 truck drivers.

In 1909, early in Blairmore's history, another industry came into existence when a cement manufacturing plant began operating under the name of the Rocky Mountain Cement Co. Ltd. It was necessary to secure a site for this plant, where raw materials could be obtained at a nominal cost, where fuel was readily available, and from which distribution to a wide market could be made with a minimum of transportation costs. Such a site was found at Blairmore. Limestone and clay of the finest quality for cement manufacturing was found within a mile of the plant. The plant was equipped with the most up to date machinery and started with an initial production capacity of 1200 barrels daily. The plant exchanged hands in 1915 when it was bought out by the Canada Cement Co., and soon after, and for some reason unknown to the writer, the plant ceased operations.

Though coal is by far the chief source of revenue, Blairmore also obtains some wealth from it's lumbering industry. Near the town is a lumber mill operated by the Sartoris Lumber Co.

Blairmore can provide good living conditions and opportunity for a small scale industry that can utilize the district resources or provide a needed service within its trading area.

46. TRADING AREA

Blairmore's trading area extends about two miles to the west, about twenty miles east and is cut off by the mountains to the north and south.

47. POPULATION

Trading Area population	- 1946 Dominion Census	- 3,773
	1950 Estimate	- 3,850
Town Population	- 1946 Dominion Census	- 1,767
	1950 Estimate	- 2,000

48. INTERESTING VIEWS OF BLAIRMORE AND DISTRICT

The
WILLSON
STATIONERY CO.
LIMITED
&
LOOSE LEAF
MANUFACTURERS

M.F. 105 M.